

Green Light Ahead for Missile Defense Program

LINDA D. KOZARYN

WASHINGTON, March 22, 2002—The U.S. Missile Defense Agency and Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty constraints part company June 14, freeing the agency to do what President Bush decides about deployment, a senior defense official said here today.

Bush announced in mid-December that the United States was withdrawing from the 1972 ABM Treaty with Russia. He said the treaty hindered America's ability to develop ways to defend against terrorist or rogue-state missile attacks.

Pete Aldridge, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, said DoD had prepared a test program that included using a series of silos in Alaska. He told reporters at a Pentagon roundtable the silos could "be used as an emergency missile defense capability" once ABM restrictions are off. However, he stressed, no deployment decisions have been made.

In January, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld approved an organizational change for missile defense that is now being implemented. "We're streamlining the process to give Gen. Kadish an ability to make very tough decisions in what we call 'a system of systems' approach to missile defense," Aldridge said.

Air Force Lt. Gen. Ronald T. Kadish is the Director of the Missile Defense Agency, formerly the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization.

The agency is chartered by the President and mandated by Congress to acquire highly effective ballistic missile defense systems for forward-deployed and expeditionary elements of the U.S. Armed Forces. The agency was also tasked to develop and, if directed, to acquire

systems for ballistic missile defense of the United States.

Rather than have the Missile Defense Agency go through the comprehensive review process currently required in the defense acquisition process, Aldridge said, officials are combining the various missile defense weapon systems. These include various intercept stages—boost phase, mid-course and terminal; various ranges of rockets—short-, medium- and long-range; and ground-, sea- and space-based technologies.

All those are weapon systems in their own right, Aldridge said. "What we've done is...[combine] all those into essentially 'a system of systems.' This gives Kadish more authority and will speed up the overall acquisition process." The Missile Defense Support Group, formed to provide oversight of the agency, Aldridge noted, will review the general's decisions.

The group includes 13 persons representing the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff and the Military Departments. They are supported by 26 analysts who will handle day-to-day details. The support group will be given access to all the data on missile defense and will have the ability to do independent analyses.

"They report to me," Aldridge said, "and they provide advice to the Director of the Missile Defense Agency and to the Senior Executive Council." Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz chairs the council, which serves as the Missile Defense Agency's board of directors, he added, and will make major decisions regarding deployment.

Editor's Note: This information is in the public domain at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news>.